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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 000893

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [LA](#) [KN](#) [SW](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH SWEDISH CHARGE TO DISCUSS
DPRK CITIZENS

REF: VIENTIANE 888

Classified By: RAVIC R. HUSO, AMBASSADOR, FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (U) This is an action request: please see paragraph 14.

12. (C//NF) Summary: According to Swedish diplomats, the two North Koreans continue to insist that their intent is to seek asylum in the United States. While the ROK Embassy is prepared and able to assist them to travel to South Korea, it is not prepared to take action until the two asylum seekers indicate that relocation to South Korea is their desire. Embassy requests Department provide guidance on possible relocation to the United States and respond to Swedish requests for information on that process. End summary.

13. (C//NF) On Tuesday December 11, 2007, the Ambassador, POL/ECON Chief, and RSO met with the Swedish Charge d'Affairs AnnLis Aberg and her visiting colleague Kaarlo Laasko, Deputy Chief of Mission, Swedish Embassy Bangkok, to discuss the presence of two North Korean men who entered the Swedish Embassy last week (reftel) and who had requested Swedish assistance in emigrating to the United States.

14. (C//NF) The Swedish diplomats provided new information about ongoing Swedish assistance to two North Korean citizens who have requested assistance to relocate to the United States. The two men, Kim Jung-yoon (DOB 08/15/1978) and Han Chang-Il (DOB 07/27/83), entered the Swedish Embassy compound through the front gate on Friday December 2, 2007, at 0900. Local guards employed by the Swedes permitted the two North Koreans to pass directly to the reception area where they presented a note to the receptionist stating that they were from North Korea and that they wanted to go to the United States. Swedish Embassy officers immediately attempted to verify their bona fides, calling on the assistance of the nearby South Korean Embassy which provided translation services. (Note: the local guard company involved, known to be owned at least in part by the Lao Government, informed police officials at once.)

Biographical Information

15. (C//NF) Through separate interviews lasting more than two hours each, the Swedes learned that the two men had traveled from North Korea through China and had entered northern Laos December 2 or 3 before heading to Vientiane. The men indicated that they had been assisted in their journey by Hee Tae Kim, who is described as a coordinator for the

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Human Rights And Mission.

One of the North Korean men provided the Swedes with a business card for Mr. Kim which contained a Bangkok address (Rama III SV City 8 Tower #2004) and telephone numbers in Thailand (66 085-225-4894), Laos (856-020-500-2008) and Korea (82 010-5577-1818) as well as an internet address: flowerswallow@hanmail.net.

¶16. (C//NF) During these interviews, Mr. Han claimed that, upon arrival in Vientiane, he scouted several Embassies to identify which allowed for the easiest entrance. Mr. Han claimed that, while walking by the Swedish Embassy, he noticed people entering and exiting with minimal security controls. He further stated that he specifically did not want to go to the South Korean Embassy as he wished to go to the United States and feared that the South Koreans would assist him only to go to South Korea. Mr. Han revealed that he had left North Korea some time around 2000 and had been living in Northern China near the North Korean border and had been involved in the internet business. Mr. Han also revealed during the interview that he had previously been caught by the Chinese and sent back to a labor camp in North Korea and ultimately made his way back to China in 2003. Mr. Han stated that he spoke Korean, some Chinese and rudimentary English.

¶17. (C//NF) During interviews with Mr. Kim, the Swedes learned that he had left North Korea during autumn 2007 after having served as a soldier for more than ten years. In China, he had worked at restaurants. Both men claimed that they had only been paired together by the NGO since crossing the border from China into Laos and that they had not previously been acquainted.

¶18. (C//NF) The Swedes told the Ambassador that

representatives from the Human Rights And Mission NGO may have stayed to witness to the North Korean men's entry to the Swedish compound. After successfully explaining their situation to the Swedes, the North Korean men initiated a telephone call to one of the numbers listed on the business card and apparently confirmed that they were receiving the assistance of the Swedish Embassy.

South Korean Assistance

¶19. (C//NF) The Swedes have maintained an active dialogue with the South Korean Embassy which has provided translation assistance as well as reading materials for the men while they wait resolution to their situation. The Swedes indicated that the South Koreans have offered to provide travel letters for the men to allow them to travel from Laos.

The South Koreans also indicated their preliminary belief that the men were North Korean as they spoke with North Korean accents and their stories about their lives in North Korea seemed credible.

¶10. (C//NF) The South Koreans have told the Swedes that if the men state a willingness and desire to emigrate to South Korea, the South Koreans are in a position to facilitate that through their own methods and to do so in fairly short order.

The South Koreans intimated to the Swedes that they have developed a discreet understanding with key members in the Lao Government that allows for the expedited removal of North Koreans to South Korea. However, so long as these men insist on relocation to the United States, the Swedes have been told by the South Koreans that they cannot enter them into their system which is predicated on the ROK as the desired destination.

Swedish Request for Assistance

¶11. (C//NF) ACTION REQUEST: In order to move the process closer to a resolution, the Swedes would like to develop a list of options to present to the North Korean men. The Swedes have requested that we describe for them the process for North Koreans to be relocated to the United States. Please advise also if Washington wishes the Swedes to present

this option or not. Clearly the most effective option would be for the North Koreans to reach the conclusion that their best course is to seek asylum in the ROK.

¶12. (C//NF) The South Koreans have indicated that their mechanism for removal involves departure from Vientiane, international transit through the Bangkok airport, and immediate onward air travel to Seoul. This route avoids involvement of Thai authorities and provides an expedited routing. As the men have insisted on relocating to the United States and not/not South Korea, post would like to know if there is a mechanism to allow for onward movement to the United States if they have to travel first to South Korea.

¶13. (C//NF) The Swedes have stated that they recognize the impediment posed to this process if the Lao were to be made aware of U.S. involvement in this case. As such, they have specifically stated that they will keep all knowledge of their contacts with the Embassy confidential.

¶14. (C//NF) ACTION REQUEST: Please respond NLT COB Washington time if possible with a blueprint of how North Koreans might be able to get from Vientiane to the United States. The Swedes would only share that information with the North Korean asylum seekers with our permission.
HUSO